In temples, palaces, and dwellings of any size the individual units are as a rule grouped about quadrangles, sometimes square and sometimes elongated. Most buildings are one or two stories in height, and more space is usually obtained, not by adding stories, as is so often done in the Occident, but courts. The best of Chinese buildings preserve a proportion between the width of courts and the heights and forms of buildings which is both impressive and restful.

A characteristic already hinted at is the extensive use of wood. A few buildings have stone pillars, but in the vast majority the framework is timber. Wooden pillars are used to support the roof and the entire structure is tied together by beams of the same material. The walls—of brick or wood or sometimes of plastered wattled or tamped earth—are simply for purposes of enclosure. In this respect the Chinese house is not unlike the steel construction of a modern Occidental office-building.

Many of the beams are left exposed. The walls may be built around the inner row of pillars and the outer row be left unenclosed. The supporting pillars may be painted or coated with lacquer and the beams carved or painted in conventional designs of various colors. In this manner the exposed wooden framework becomes an ornamental feature and the view upward, toward the beams and rafters which support the roof, can be made very attractive.

Chinese pillars are without capitals in the Western sense of that word. Often wooden brackets at the top give the appearance of helping to support the beam above and so prevent the transition from seeming abrupt. Usually, too, there are pedestals, some of them small, but many of them large and highly orna-

mented.

As a rule important buildings are placed on platforms faced with brick or stone. Some of the platforms are low, requiring only one or two steps to mount them. Many, however, are quite high, necessitating a dozen or more steps. The platforms and the stairways are often set off by balustrades of stone, brick, or wood, in numerous instances elaborately carved. The stairways themselves may be broad, and frequently two rows of steps are separated by an inclined face displaying an elaborately carved dragon. There may be three sets of steps mounting the platform, espe-